



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge Planning Workbook

Spring 1999

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Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge



The approved Refuge acquisition boundary encompasses approximately 7,500 acres along the Wallkill River in northwestern New Jersey and southeastern New York. As of right now, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has purchased about 3,582 acres from willing sellers within the acquisition boundary.



The Wallkill River

Comprehensive Conservation Planning

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is starting work on a long-term management plan for the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge and a new Refuge in Ulster County, NY, at the former Galeville Army Training Facility. A Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) will be developed – a practical guide for managing these two Refuges over the next 10 - 15 years.

This planning project provides a unique opportunity for the Service to involve individuals and local communities in the long-term management of our National Wildlife Refuges. You can play a significant role in the development of this far-reaching plan!

Who's Leading This Effort?

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, part of the Department of the Interior, is the principle federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing the nation's fish and wildlife populations and their habitats.

The Service also manages the National Wildlife

Refuge System, the world's largest collection of lands set aside specifically for the protection of fish and wildlife populations and habitats.

Refuges provide important habitats for native plants and animals, facilitating the preservation of threatened or endangered species. Refuges also offer a wide variety of wildlife-dependant recreational opportunities, and many have visitor centers, hiking trails, and environmental education programs.

Refuge Purpose

The Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge was established by Congress in 1990 for the following purposes:

- to preserve and enhance Refuge lands and waters in a manner that will conserve the natural diversity of fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for present and future generations;
- to conserve and enhance populations of fish, wildlife, and plants within the Refuge, including populations of black duck and other waterfowl, raptors, passerines, and waterbirds;

News from the Wallkill River NWR and Galeville Army Training Facility

Why Is This Planning Effort Starting Now?

In October 1997, the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act was passed. This Act clarifies the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System and identifies national priorities and management emphasis. The mission of the Refuge System is:

"To administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans."

National priorities and management emphases are to:

- 1) maintain biological integrity, diversity and health on refuges;
- 2) provide the wildlife-dependent activities of hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, interpretation, and environmental education are the appropriate priority public uses;
- 3) assess the compatibility of all public uses with the purpose for which the refuge was established; and
- 4) prepare Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCP's) for each National Wildlife Refuge.

Our goal is to prepare a CCP within the next year. Specifically, this plan will:

- outline refuge management operations and priorities for the next 10-15 years;
- identify and describe significant refuge resources and their importance in a regional and national context;
- identify how the Service can best protect resources;
- clarify what public uses are compatible with managing significant resources;
- identify the Refuge's role within local communities and as a national resource.

Refuge Purpose (cont.)

- to protect and enhance the water quality of aquatic habitats within the Refuge;
- to fulfill international treaty obligations of the U.S. with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats;
- and to provide opportunities for compatible scientific research, environmental education, and fish and wildlife-oriented recreation.

Exciting Events...

Besides initiating the CCP effort, we are excited about our new office. We are now located in a beautifully renovated farm house. We encourage you to come visit!

Our other big news is the acquisition, in whole or in part, of the former Galeville Army Training Facility in Shawangunk, NY, Ulster County. The Service will plan the new Refuge in partnership with local officials as part of the CCP process.

The Galeville Army Training Facility

Refuge Purpose

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service requested transfer of the 621 acre former Galeville Army Training Facility to protect and manage the valuable grassland habitats on the property. The site provides nesting and wintering habitat for a number of grassland bird species that are experiencing population declines throughout their range as habitat is developed or reverts to forest. The new refuge will be managed to protect grassland species while providing opportunities to engage in compatible wildlife-dependent public use.

When Will the Refuge Be Established?

The actual transfer of the site from the United States Military Academy to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will take place during the summer of 1999. We are looking forward to a dedication ceremony during National Wildlife Refuge Week in October, 1999.

The Service is considering calling the site the "Shawangunk Grasslands National Wildlife Refuge". This name recognizes both the town and geographic features in the area.

What Public Uses Will be Allowed on the New Refuge?

Compatible wildlife-dependant public uses will be encouraged. A nature trail, which will facilitate observation and photography, is planned. Environmental education and interpretation will also be offered. Decisions have yet to be made about hunting.

Some of the previous public uses allowed by the U.S. Military Academy, such as model airplane flying and car shows, will not be allowed. Dog walking will also not be allowed. These activities often conflict with management of the area for sensitive wildlife species and can detract from the enjoyment of visitors seeking a nature-based recreational experience.

We plan to allow some public use beginning this fall, and would welcome any comment on the topic. More public use opportunities will be made available over time.

Will There be a Permanent Staff and Office Building at the New Refuge?

The Service will seek funding to build a small office and visitor contact station at the new refuge, and to have a permanent staff stationed there. We would like the building to include a classroom for environmental education.

Want to Get Involved?

Participation by you and other interested groups and individuals is critical to the success of this planning process. Only then can effective management be developed which reflects your interests.

The following Issues Workbook is one way to let the Refuge hear your ideas. Please take the time to fill it in and send it back to us. In addition, the Refuge is planning a series of hosted Open Houses in April. These Open Houses will be held in several towns near the Refuge in order to hear directly from folks like you--to learn how you feel about the Refuge, as well as your ideas for getting things done. We hope you can attend an Open House in your community. Locations, dates, and times for Open Houses are enclosed and will also be announced in local newspapers.

The Issues Workbook



The New Headquarters

The Refuge headquarters have moved to the Dagmar Dale Dairy Farm, formerly owned by the Van Althuis family.

Getting Involved...

You can help us focus our planning effort on those things that matter to you and your community. Your comments will assist us in identifying the best alternatives for long-term management of the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge and the Galeville Site.

The following workbook has been mailed to everyone on our mailing list and will be handed out to everyone who attends the Open House meetings. It provides an effective way for us to share background information and to hear your ideas and concerns on important issues affecting the Refuge. We have compiled a list of questions to provide a basis for comparing your comments with others we receive. Answer any or all that are important to you. Feel free to either add additional comments in the space provided, give us a call, Email, or write us at the address provided on the last page.

The comments we receive in the workbooks and at the public meetings will help us identify issues and develop goals and objectives.

Questions on Values, Vision, and the Service's Role

1. How many times each year do you visit the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge?

☐ 0 - 5
☐ 5 - 25
☐ 25 - 50
☐ 50+

2. What are your favorite activities to engage in while visiting the Refuge?

3. With a larger perspective in mind, what do you value most about the Wallkill River Watershed?



Habitat Resoration.

The 500 acre Liberty Sod Farm is being transformed into a working laboratory for the study of moist soil management

4. What do you consider to be the most important problem facing the Wallkill River Watershed today?

Our Vision

Looking Ahead to 2015...

Issues Workbook

(Continued)

The Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge lies nestled between forested ridges in northwest New Jersey and southeast New York. Working with partners, we provide leadership that promotes the physical and biological integrity of the Wallkill River and its associated habitats. Our conservation focus includes management for wildlife dependent on native grasslands and wetlands for survival. Special attention is given to the Federally and State listed threatened and endangered species living on the refuge, as well as those species that are in jeopardy but are not yet endangered. We strive to help keep plants and animals off the endangered species list! The refuge is vital to many protected species because the river valley provides an important habitat link with other natural areas within the lower Hudson River ecosystem.

Refuge lands are a destination for local residents and urban visitors eager to experience the beauty and diversity offered at the refuge. Our environmental education and interpretive opportunities showcase the ecological importance of the Wallkill River Valley and the public benefits from successful habitat management. Many come to enjoy the variety of wildlife dependent recreation activities. Visitors leave with an appreciation for the National Wildlife Refuge System, why the Wallkill River NWR was established, and how it contributes to wildlife conservation on a national scale.

Local municipalities and businesses support the refuge, considering it to be an asset to their interests. The refuge contributes to a robust outdoor, nature-based recreation economy that provides significant economic contributions locally.

Through our continued dedication and ongoing acquisition and management of exceptional wildlife areas, bolstered with support from the Friends of Wallkill River NWR, the public is assured this refuge will provide benefits to the American people for generations to come.



The Wallkill River

5. What technical services would you like Refuge staff to provide to your local community? (check if appropriate)

	Wallkill River NWR	Galeville
wetlands management	___	___
management of endangered species	___	___
grasslands restoration	___	___
management to benefit wildlife	___	___
land protection funding	___	___
control of invasive plant and animal species	___	___
volunteer opportunities	___	___
grants for habitat management	___	___
other: _____	___	___
_____	___	___

6. Did you attend one of the Open Houses? Yes ____ No ____
Date/town: _____

7. Where did you obtain this Workbook? (This will help us determine the most effective places to distribute these in the future.)

8. What do you think of our Vision Statement (*see sidebar*)? Any comments/suggestions?

9. Please include here any additional comments you wish to make on values, vision or the Service's role in your community.

Issues Workbook

(Continued)

Tentative Planning Schedule

- Open Houses to identify issues and action options...

Spring 1999

- Meetings with agencies, groups and other interested parties...

Ongoing

- Defining issues, Developing Strategies and Alternatives...

Through fall 1999

- Draft CCP/Environmental documents released and distributed...

April 2000

- Public Meetings on the Draft CCP...

May 2000

- Final CCP/Environmental documents released and distributed...

November 2000

- Begin implementing the Action Plan...

December 2000

Questions on Fish, Wildlife and Their Habitats

The Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge provides important habitat a wide variety of species, including some that are threatened or endangered. Also, rare and declining plant communities exist on the Refuge. This project will emphasize the importance of these habitats and the need to conserve, protect, and enhance their existence and the species that live in these habitats.

1. Are there specific areas within the Wallkill River Watershed that, in your opinion, need protection? If so, please list them here, and explain why you think they are important.

2. Which options should the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service pursue in protecting important habitats that are not currently in a National Wildlife Refuge? (Please check your top 3 choices)

- A. ☐ land acquisition
- B. ☐ conservation easements
- C. ☐ purchasing development rights
- D. ☐ partnerships with private land owners
- E. ☐ work with conservation groups
- F. ☐ environmental education
- G. ☐ grants programs
- H. ☐ habitat restoration
- I. ☐ no active involvement
- J. ☐ other (please specify)

3. How do you feel about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acquiring land from willing sellers?

4. Are any of the following issues a concern to you? If so, please check your top three choices.

- A. ☐ the fragmentation of important habitats
- B. ☐ invasion of exotic plant and animal species
- C. ☐ overdevelopment of fragile habitats
- E. ☐ increased recreational use in sensitive habitat areas
- F. ☐ decreased water quality within the Wallkill River
- G. ☐ lack of active management to improve wildlife habitats
- H. ☐ other issues (please specify)

5. If possible, please provide additional details on why you selected the above. In particular, we would be interested to know specific locations of concern.



Uplands

In addition to the Refuge's abundant wetlands, the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge also encompasses about 1,900 acres of forest, grassland, and farmland habitats.

Issues Workbook

(Continued)

Schedule and locations of open houses

3. Please include here any additional comments on conserving fish and wildlife habitat.

Questions on Recreation, Education and Access

It is important to recognize that there are laws and policy that guide management of public use on National Wildlife Refuges. National Wildlife Refuges are closed to a public use until officially designated open. And, only those public uses that are “compatible” with the purpose(s) for which a Refuge was established are allowed. The Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge was established with a purpose to conserve, preserve, and enhance native species, protect water quality, and provide for compatible research and public use.

Six wildlife-dependent uses are identified by the Refuge Improvement Act as being a priority on National Wildlife Refuges when determined to be compatible. These are: environmental education, fishing, hunting, interpretation, wildlife observation, and wildlife photography.

“Compatibility” with the Refuge purpose is determined by the Refuge Manager based on an evaluation of:

- 1) anticipated impacts to natural resources
- 2) whether safety among and between users can be maintained
- 3) whether the Refuge has the budget and staffing resources to administer the activity.

1. In your opinion, which of the following wildlife-dependent public uses should be allowed on each Refuge? Please check all that apply.

	Wallkill River NWR	Galeville
environmental education & interpretation	_____	_____
fishing	_____	_____n/a_____
hunting	_____	_____
wildlife observation & photography	_____	_____

2. Are any of these activities, or current levels of use in general, a concern?



The Wood Duck Trail

This beautiful interpretive trail was once a railroad bed. (where's it located?)

3. Do our recreational facilities meet your needs? (trails, parking, signs, etc.) Please explain.

Issues Workbook

(Continued)

Please contact us if you have any questions or need additional information. Also, we would be happy to meet with your group or organization to discuss this process. Direct all inquiries to:

Libby Herland, Refuge Manager
Wallkill River NWR
1547 County Route 565
Sussex, NJ 07461

phone: (973) 702-7266
email:

FAX: (973) 702-7286

also, check out our Regional Web Page at:
www.fws.gov/~R5fws

4. Please include here any additional comments on recreation, education, and public access.

That's it! Thank you for your time.

IMPORTANT: Now that you are done, please separate pages 3 - 7, put them into the self-addressed, stamped envelope and drop it in the mail by September 9, 1999. We'll let you know the results as soon as we can. Please help us keep our mailing list updated by completing the following.

Are you on our mailing list? *(you are if you received this by mail)*

If you wish to receive future "Planning Updates" about the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan, please fill in the appropriate information below and return with the Issues Workbook.

_____ (Yes) Keep me on your mailing list.

_____ (Yes) Add me to your mailing list (I'm not currently on it).

_____ (No) Take me off your mailing list.

Name: _____ (Please Print)

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

If you are acting in an official capacity as the representative of an organization, please complete the following two items.

Organization: _____

Title: _____

IMPORTANT: Please note that names on the Comprehensive Conservation Plan Mailing List become part of the public record for this project. The Service must release names only, if requested, under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act of 1974. To retain you on our mailing list we need your permission. Please sign below.

Signature: _____ Date: _____



Turkeys

Wild turkeys are a common site in the fields around the Wallkill River

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
300 Westgate Center Dr.
Hadley, MA 01035 - 958945
Attn: Nancy McGarrigal